

Environmental Strategy 2021 - 2023

This strategy sets out the steps BHT Sussex are taking to:

- assess our environmental impact.
- work towards reducing our environmental impact.

Context

BHT turned 50 in 2018 and in 2021 we changed our name to BHT Sussex, reflecting the Sussex wide coverage of our services. We are working to establish our environmental strategy, which will see BHT Sussex examining operations to reduce our impact on the environment over the next 50 years of operation. We acknowledge the climate crisis is the biggest threat to humanity in the coming years and need to play our part by reducing our impact. Local and national government, and the National Housing Federation (NHF) all acknowledge this need. At the time of drafting this strategy:

- UK Government is committed to reducing UK carbon emissions by 78% of 1990 levels by 2035 and net zero by 2050.
- Brighton and Hove City Council and Hastings Borough Council have declared a climate emergency - pledging to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- NHF are working on a road map for net zero carbon¹ for housing by 2050.

At BHT Sussex we acknowledge the urgency of the climate crisis, and will work to embed sustainability across our operations, and towards reducing our carbon emissions net zero carbon as swiftly as practical considerations and financing allow. We will develop an environmental strategy to cover BHT operations over the next 50 years.

This initial two-year strategy sets out the first steps which will inform the longer-term strategy to:

- establish our baseline impact.
- improve the data we hold about our properties and operations so we can identify where the most significant environmental impacts are across the organisation.
- seek to reduce costs to the organisation and reduce the utility bills of our clients and tenants.
- identify areas where we can act to reduce our impact now.

We have identified three key areas of focus within this strategy:

1. Our clients and tenants
2. Our properties
3. Our organisation

For each area we have identified objectives we want to achieve over the next two years.

1. Our Clients and Tenants

To reduce utility costs among clients & tenants and help reduce their carbon footprint by introducing a number of measures. We will:

- Look to work in partnership with local energy saving services to train clients and tenants as energy champions.
- Promote low-cost measures that improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort (for example, draught excluders and thermal curtains).
- Provide regular energy saving advice to clients and tenants in our communications.
- Seek to install smart meters on landlord supplies so we can monitor energy use and reduce estimated bills.
- Move communal utilities to renewable energy providers where the cost is similar to non-renewable.
- Promote measures that improve water efficiency and prevent wastage of water.
- Seek to install water meters on landlord supplies so we can monitor water use and reduce estimated bills.
- Reduce the environmental impact of meals provided in our services.

2. Our Properties

We recognise the need to improve the energy efficiency and quality of our properties. More specifically, the need to ensure that all properties have a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030, as far as reasonably practicable, as set out in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for England 2015. We will:

- Establish the current EPC and SAP rating of all BHT properties.
- Design any new builds or developments to have zero emissions.
- Develop a plan to improve the energy performance of our properties.
- Design any new builds or developments to have efficient use of water and sustainable drainage.
- Seek grant funding where possible to help deliver our plan.
- Improve the biodiversity of our estates, gardens and green spaces through maintenance and client and tenant involvement.
- Improve the biodiversity of our estates, gardens and green spaces where they are to be redesigned or replanted.

3. Our Organisation

We will work to ensure the organisation is an environmentally conscious workplace and will meet the government target of net zero carbon by 2050 at the latest. We will:

- Complete a carbon assessment to establish the carbon footprint of our offices.
- Review procurement procedures to work towards embedding sustainability in our supply chains and reducing waste.
- Develop a plan to reduce our carbon emissions.
- Forecast costs for work towards carbon reduction in line with available information
- Develop a plan to reduce waste and improve recycling rates.
- Encourage an environmentally sustainable culture by establishing environmental champions, including environmental stewardship in learning and development and regular staff communications.
- Encourage use of sustainable transport and active transport where possible.
- Continue the use of online and teleconferencing as an alternative to travelling for meetings, where possible.
- Seek to benchmark ourselves against other similar sized organisations.
- Investigate the possibility of achieving SHIFT accreditation, Certified Sustainable Housing or similar accreditation status

Timing

An action plan accompanies this strategy, setting out timelines for working towards objectives set.

For more substantive long - term change like retrofitting properties for energy saving, external drivers will determine timelines. These include confirmation of government policy – for example, the Heating and Building Strategy due later in 2021. The availability of suitable funding to support works towards decarbonisation will also influence progress.

While we monitor for government policy drivers and available funding sources, there are many tasks we can progress to reduce our environmental impact – including benchmarking our current resource use and waste arisings; promoting energy and water saving measures that should save costs; enhancing greenspace for biodiversity and embedding awareness of environmental impacts across the organisation.

A communications plan setting out our plan for internal and external communications to encourage behaviour change will underpin this work.

Both the action plan and communications plan will be live documents, periodically reviewed to adapt to external opportunities and drivers as they arise.